



# About the United Way of Central Iowa Out-of-School Time Initiative

May 2013

According to the Children's Reading Foundation, up to half of printed fourth grade school curriculum is incomprehensible to students who read below that grade level. In other words, beginning in fourth grade, children are *reading to learn*, using their skills to read math and science, to solve problems, to acquire knowledge based on their interests, and to critically think what they are learning (Leila Fiester et al 2010, p. 9). This, of course, is the desired state for all children. In reality, not all children read or perform at grade level. Researchers at John Hopkins University identified that not performing at grade level can build up the pressure on the child to the extent that they lose interest and motivation to stay in school, thus eventually dropping out. This is an unacceptable trajectory.

*It is critical that communities, alongside schools, support our students' literacy both in and out of the classroom.*

United Way of Central Iowa recognizes that out-of-school time presents an opportunity to support a students' school day learning through hands-on, engaging programming and that participation in high quality OST can improve student behavior, proficiency, and interest. To more directly influence student literacy in their service area, United Way of Central Iowa is investing in a special initiative of its Education Early and Middle Grade Success Strategies to infuse more high-quality literacy activities into existing OST programs.

Through the one-on-one support of a literacy coach and information sharing through a network of grantees, each program participating in the OST Initiative will identify and be trained on strategies that they can use long-term to promote higher literacy achievement of the students attending their program. The OST Initiative seeks to improve student achievement in reading and writing through the following goals:

- ✓ Greater frequency of activities that develop literacy skills (see definition to the right)
- ✓ Improved quality (quantity, appropriateness, and categorical diversity) of program resources available to support high-quality literacy strategies, including but not limited to technology, books, and curricula
- ✓ Improved staff capabilities (knowledge and confidence) to provide high-quality literacy strategies
- ✓ Improved OST program and school collaboration
- ✓ Improved use of student-level data to identify and evaluate literacy strategies

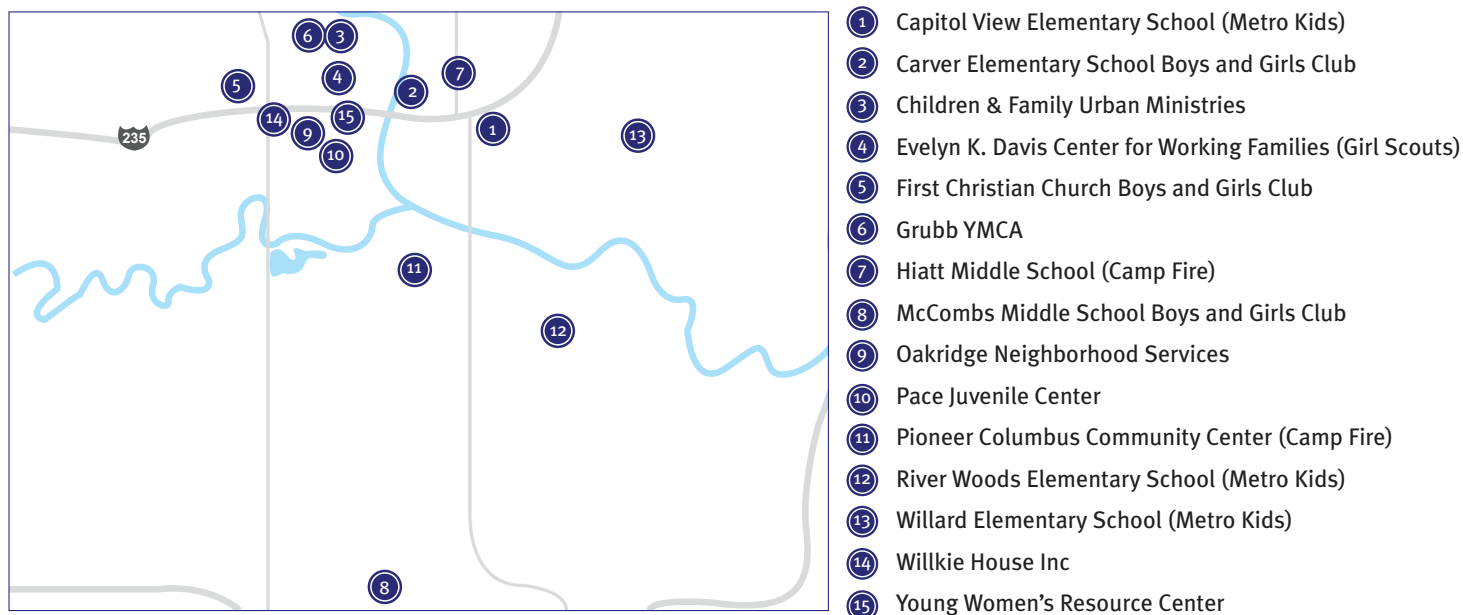
## What activities promote literacy skills in OST?

Literacy is the ability to read and write one's own name and further for knowledge and interest, write coherently, and think critically about the written word (Wikipedia). Reading aloud and self-guided reading are examples of activities that develop literacy skills. Other examples of activities that develop literacy skills include writing stories; reading, discussing and dramatizing literature; book discussion groups; intensive tutoring; project research; technology usage; presentation of research or a project, and both small and large group reading activities. Many other activities can incorporate elements that build literacy, including physical fitness, music and the arts, and cooking and nutrition.

All activities implemented as part of the OST Initiative will, by necessity, align with the appropriate school district goals and curricula and the Iowa Core. Literacy coaches will use the following framework to structure their support to OST programs participating in the Initiative:

1. *The “Why”*: the theory underlying instruction based on student needs
2. *The “How”*: demonstration of strategies
3. *The “Do”*: observation of staff practicing new strategies
4. *Reflection*: feedback and reflection regarding strategies
5. *Collaboration*: supporting collaboration among staff and schools and among programs

## OST Initiative Partners – Cohort I



Programs participating in the OST Initiative will benefit from the knowledge and expertise of a literacy coach, be provided supplemental funds to purchase materials needed to implement activities with the literacy coach, and learn from their peers through best practice and resource sharing. UWCI has committed to investing in this Initiative for at least the next year with the possibility of extension in fiscal year 2015 based on the promise of effectiveness established in the pilot year 2013-2014.

## Contact:

*State Public Policy Group* (SPPG) provides day-to-day support to the OST Initiative under contract with United Way of Central Iowa. SPPG also provides staff support to the *Iowa Afterschool Alliance*, a critical resource to this project and others statewide that seek to expand access to high quality afterschool programming.

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